The San Bernardino County Museum Guest Lecture Series

Animal Flight through the Lens of Evolution

Douglas Altshuler, Ph.D.

Wednesday, May 28, 2008 • 7:30pm • Free Admission

One of the most remarkable adaptations in animals is the ability to fly. Birds, bats and insects are among the most successful of terrestrial organisms, and their colonization of diverse habitats and ecological roles provides a rich context for studies of animal behavior and ecology. The study of how animals fly involves aspects of aerodynamics, physiology, and neuroscience. Flight behavior provides a powerful yet experimentally tractable system with which to understand how complex locomotion is accomplished, and how variation in locomotor performance influences higher-order behaviors. In my laboratory, we aim to integrate approaches ranging from laboratory experiments to evolutionary comparisons because understanding the mechanisms of flight control also requires understanding the historical forces that have shaped it. Conversely, to evaluate the mechanisms by which ecological changes result in biological adaptations requires a well-described system that can be studied in different environments.

Douglas Altshuler earned his Ph.D. in Zoology at the University of Texas at Austin. He is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of California, Riverside, and the recipient of the George A. Bartholomew Award for Research in Comparative Physiology (2006) and a National Institutes of Health, National Service Research Award (2003–2006).

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(909) 307-2669 • www.sbcountymuseum.org

2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands
California Street exit from Interstate 10